THE LIBRARY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Richmond, Virginia 23227

No. 15.

NEVER TOO LATE.

WB
23
Zp
Box 3
no. 13

BY

B. M. PALMER, D. D.

During the epidemic of 1867, a pastor in the city of New Orleans was just leaving his study to attend the funeral of one who had fallen a victim to the pestilence. A crumpled note was placed in his hands requesting him to repair immediately to the couch of a dying stranger. Promising to obey the summons as soon as released from the service then present, within an hour he turned sadly away from the cemetery, where the solemn words, "dust to dust," had just been pronounced, to look again upon Death, struggling with his prey, in a retired chamber.

A single glance revealed the form of an athletic young man, with a broad and noble brow, upon which the seal of the grave was visibly set. Sitting upon the edge of the bed, and taking the sufferer's hand kindly in his own, the preacher said, "Mr. M., do you know how ill you are?"

"Yes," was the quick response; "I shall soon pass the bourne whence no traveller returns."

"Are you, then, prepared to die?"

"Alas! no, sir," fell upon the ear like the knell of a lost soul.

"Will you, then, let me pray for you?" and with the assent given, the knee was bowed before Him who alone has power to save. In two or three terse sentences, uttered with a tremulous emotion, the case of the dying sinner was laid at the mercy-seat.

The moments were shortening fast; very soon the last sand would disappear from the hour-glass. The conversation was promptly resumed, as follows:—

"Mr. M., I am told you are the son of pious parents, and have been reared in the bosom of the Church; you do not need, therefore, that I should explain to you the way of salvation—for which, indeed, there is now no time. But you know that the Bible says, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' Only believe *now* in this Saviour, and you are saved."

"Oh! sir," was the reply, "if God will only spare me this once I promise that I will live very differently in the future than I have lived in the past."

"My dear friend," rejoined the minister, "this is the last device of Satan to destroy your soul. I tell you faithfully, there is no future for you in this world; you are now passing, whilst I speak, through the gateway of Death, and what you do, you must do at once, or be lost forever."

To this appeal the only answer was a deep groan, whilst the beads of moisture, gathering upon that ample forehead, and the swollen veins, drawn like a dark seam across it, betokened the anguish of a guilty spirit, shrinking from the presence of an angry God. A few seconds of awful silence intervened; but a last effort must be made to pluck this soul from the lethargy of

despair. "Mr. M., do you remember the story of the penitent thief upon the cross? His time was short, just as your's is; but one brief prayer, not longer than a line, expressed his faith, and was enough. So you see that it is never too late."

At this the closed eyes were opened, and the first word of hope fell from the parted lips: "*No, it is not too late; thank God, it is not too late.*"

"Mr. M.," said the pastor, "do you trust now in the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"Yes, I do; He is my Saviour, and I am not afraid to die!" rung out upon the startled listeners, as though a note from the song of the harpers had fallen from heaven into that chamber of death.

There was another silence of a few seconds—this time a silence of wonder and joy; it was broken by the dying man, as he turned upon his side and whispered to the minister, "Will you write to my father?"

"Yes, certainly: but what shall I tell him?"

"Tell him I have found Jesus, who has pardoned my sins, and I am not afraid to die; he will meet me in heaven."

It was his last utterance, for in the next moment the soul, that had passed through this fierce struggle into the second birth, winged its separate flight, and stood before the throne.

The whole interview thus described was shut up within the limits of fifteen minutes, from the moment of entrance into that darkened chamber, till the tenantless body lay in its cold sweat, to be shrouded for the tomb.

Sad, yet sweet, were the pastor's thoughts as he walked to his home, beneath the stars, through the streets of the silent city—thoughts of the vast solemnity and preciousness of his office, as an ambassador for Christ—thoughts of that blessed family covenant by

which God remembers the prayers of a believing parent, and looks at the tears in his bottle—sometimes even upon the death-bed of the child—thoughts of that unutterable Love which saves, even to the uttermost, and makes it *never too late* to pluck the brand from the burning.

TO-DAY THE SAVIOUR CALLS.

To-day the Saviour calls,
Ye wand'ers, home;
Oh, ye benighted souls,
Why longer roam?

2 To-day the Saviour calls;
Oh, hear Him now:
Within these sacred walls
To Jesus bow.

3 To-day the Saviour calls;
For refuge fly;
The storm of justice falls,
And death is nigh.

4 The Spirit calls to-day:
Yield to His power;
Oh, grieve Him not away!
'Tis mercy's hour.

UNION PRESBYTERIAN SEMINARY
3 2146 00527 9792